STATEMENT: (Here is where you make a claim.)

Close textual analysis seems to suggest that Genesis chapters 6-9 was written as a sort of apologetic for the unpleasant task given to the Hebrew people to eradicate the existing peoples from the land they were commanded to occupy.

PROOF: Here is where you provide a generalized reason(s) for your claim(s)

They are offered the flood story as a precedent to the task they are asked to do; they are given an explanatory story about a son gone bad, to show the nature of the people they were **commanded** to exterminate; and finally, they are shown the one-sided covenants of God to bolster the claim that God would keep his covenants even when the frailty of human nature caused humans to fail in keeping their side of the things.

EXPLANATION

The writer of Genesis chapter six makes it very clear that God is the one who is responsible for cleansing the earth from the contaminates that had begun to build up across the earth. The text even goes so far as to state that it “repented” and “grieved” Him that the “imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”(6:5-6). Thus, when God strikes down the millions of people who were only evil continually, he does so with full justification of his seemingly brutal actions—after all, people who are “only evil continually” deserve to receive God’s judgment.

Moses, the traditionally ascribed author for the Pentateuch, realizes that people should understand why God wiped so many people from the face of the earth; however, he also realizes that, more importantly, he and his current people are being asked to exterminate the Canaanites—who were, traditionally speaking, evil, corrupt, depraved, and, most importantly, the descendants of a cursed man, Ham’s son, Canaan. The story of Ham’s son, Canaan, then, who is cursed at the actions of his father, serves to justify the intentional targeting of Canaanites for death. After all, Moses, and then Moses’ successor Joshua are given explicit orders to slay every man, woman and child in Canaan. Thus, there is a sense of relief at the task at hand, knowing that although it’s awful to have to do this, God did the same thing, and on a much greater scale.

Finally, this disturbing story of a son, whose disrespect results in the cursing of his own son, ultimately provides proof of the one-sided nature of covenants with Yahweh. Even when the Hebrews (like Noah) foul up, God’ covenants remain intact, a testament to the power and loving care of the Hebrew God.

SYNTHESIS/SUMMARY

In short, there’s clear evidence that the exigency of having to convince one’s fellow Hebrews to slay multitudes of men, woman and children—the exigency of such rhetorical situation demands that the speaker come up with something really persuasive, really powerful, really good! The Deluge story does just that. It provides the listeners with solid argumentation for going to war with the Canaanites, suggesting that since God wiped out the inhabitants of all the earth due to their continuous evil, Moses, too, would assist God in wiping out all the inhabitants of Canaan. After all, wiping out 12,000 Canaanites would be a trivial matter to a more worldwide destruction of millions. God did it first, why can’t we? It also provides sound evidence that the Canaanites were cold, ruthless people deserving the total annihilation—the very annihilation that Moses was enlisting his people to engage in. And finally, this story provides just the right amount of trust for the Hebrew audience—trust in a God who has the ultimate and final say over everything. And that includes saying yes to a group of imperfect people like Noah—a group of imperfect people who still pick up and go after themselves—all with God’s help.

Examples:

Statement:

In “The Battle of Humbaba,” a portion of *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* we find three striking cultural values that Babylonians found to be of great importance: bravery, fame, and friendship.

PROOF

These values emerge in the text when Enkidu resists fleeing the battle, Gilgamesh pursues glory and remembrance, and both characters embrace each other’s ambitions.

EXPLANATION

SYNTHESIS (SUMMARY)

Here is a list of potential claims about what the Babylonian culture valued…

* Bravery
* Immortality
* Self perpetuation
* Fame
* Friendship
* Religion
* Courage
* Skill
* Argumentation
* Caution (Intelligent Course of Action)

And here’s the actual prompt itself:

